

WILLIAM S. MIDDLETON MEMORIAL  
VETERANS HOSPITAL & CLINICS  
2500 Overlook Terrace  
Madison, WI 53705

HOSPITAL MEMORANDUM  
No. 122-16-14

March 1, 2016  
RES: 3/1/19

INTERPRETER SERVICES

- I. PURPOSE: To establish policy regarding the use of interpreters to assist patients and families in the normal delivery of medical care when the use of a common language is not possible.
- II. POLICY: It is the policy of this hospital that language barriers will not prevent the provision of critical medical care. Interpreter services are contracted or arranged from available sources and will be used to ensure that patients and providers can communicate essential medical information.
- III. RESPONSIBILITY: Providers are ultimately responsible for ensuring that essential medical information is effectively communicated when a language barrier exists and that patients and family are fully informed about their medical care in a language they can understand.
  - A. Health care providers will encourage use of interpreter services regardless of the presence or availability of family friends, or, especially, children. Interpretation of medical information cannot be compromised by accidental omissions, substitutions, or family relationships which might influence the process.
  - B. Protected health information exchanged via interpreters may be quite sensitive. Care must be taken to ensure that both patient confidentiality and objectivity are safeguarded if a patient insists that friends or family serve as interpreters. If this occurs, it is advisable to remind patients that interpreters are available to them at no cost. When family or friends interpret under these circumstances, medical staff is advised to either obtain a release from the patient, or at least note in the record that interpretation services were provided by family or friends at the patient's request.

The VISN 12 Telephone Operator Call Center (located at the Madison VA Hospital) is responsible for assisting all VISN 12 facility staff with telephone access to over the phone interpreting support and is available for immediate access 24/7.
  - C. Madison Social Work and Chaplain (SW) Service will act as liaison to coordinate in-person interpreting services for Madison VAH staff.
- IV. PROCEDURE:
  - A. Hospital staff, especially care providers, should determine any need for language interpreters at the start of a clinical encounter.

- B. Clinicians or administrative staff are expected to initiate contact with interpreter services through the Telephone Operator (0) when telephonic interpretation is deemed adequate to meet the patient's needs. The use of an in-person interpreter may delay this process and is more appropriate for scheduled appointments.
- D. Health care providers needing in person or video remote interpreters will contact Social Work Service at ext.17085 and provide details on tentative date, time, location, planned participants (including required providers or other service representatives), and anticipated duration of meeting one week in advance. For 'live' interpreter services needed in less than one week, Social Work will follow up and may negotiate alternate date/time based on participant availability.
- V. REFERENCES: Joint Commission, Standard RI.01.01.03, 2015; Title III, American with Disabilities Act; VHA Directive 2012-024, Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination in Federally-Conducted Programs and Activities in Federal-Financial Assisted Programs and Activities; Executive Order 13166, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency, 2009 State of Wisconsin Act 360 Licensing Sign Language Interpreters
- VI. RESCISSION: Hospital Memorandum 122-12-14, dated May 15, 2012
- VII. AUTOMATIC RESCISSION: March 1, 2019
- VIII. FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITY: Chief, Social Work and Chaplain Service

John J. Rohrer, MHA  
Director

Attachment

**DEPARTMENT OF  
VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**Memorandum**

Date: June 10, 2016

From: Jane Ludwig, Chief of Social Work and Chaplain Service  
John Provenzano, Centralized Attendant Manager

Subj: Interpreter Services

To: All Staff

1. Providing patients and their families who have limited English proficiency or who are deaf or hard of hearing with equal ability to communicate and participate in health care activities is an important responsibility of this hospital. Two different methods are available to assist with interpreter services when needed.

2. **Language Line Solutions:** This is a telephone-based interpreter system. It is available 24 hours-a-day, 7 days-a-week, and is the primary system that should be used by any staff member when an interpreter is needed.

- A. Utilize an exam or conference room with a speaker phone for the meeting that will involve the Language Line interpreter.
- B. Dial the Telephone Operator (0) and ask for assistance contacting Language Line.
- C. Inform the Operator of the desired language and they will make the connection with Language Line. When an interpreter comes on the line, summarize what you wish to accomplish and provide any special instructions.
- D. Speak directly to the patient or family member in need of interpretation assistance.
- E. Say "End of Call" to the Language Line interpreter when the call is completed.

3. **Interpreters:** VISN 12 has a contract with LanguageLine Solutions. In addition to the telephone based system listed above, they also will schedule face to face interpreters for American Sign Language, Spanish and 11 other languages M-F when requested for future appointments. When the need for a "live" interpreter arises, Social Work and Chaplain Service should be contacted. Social Work staff will contact LanguageLine Solutions and coordinate scheduling arrangements. If LanguageLine Solutions is unable to schedule an interpreter then Social Work and Chaplain Service will utilize the two other contracted vendors who provide "live" interpreters. Access to "live" interpreters is dependent upon the availability of certified interpreters in the Madison or CBOC geographical area.

4. Thank you for your assistance with this important hospital goal. Please direct any questions to the Social Work and Chaplain Service, ext. 17085.